



**THE AIM OF LIFE**  
**The scale of value**  
Extract from 11/2/05 Satsang

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*Om Shri Paramatmane Namaha*

As we all know that to experience the self or experience God is the only aim of human life. If one cannot achieve this one's life remains unfulfilled and incomplete without stable peace and happiness. I keep repeating what the great saints have said, that fortunate are they who come to the conclusion that this is the only purpose of life and of the human body. This word 'only' is important. It takes a long time to understand how it can be the only purpose and that there is no other purpose. However, this is to be understood.

All seekers in the world have in their life the element of pleasure and pain. If our human life is concerned only with these two factors - pleasure and pain - then there is no difference between human life and animal life. Pleasure and pain are common to the lives of both. You may ask how we can distinguish between humans and animals. The answer is very clear. The distinguishing feature in animal life is instinct which is determined by nature. But in human life the most distinguishing feature is the factor of discrimination (*vivek*). This is the faculty through which human beings can decide what is right or wrong, what is good or bad and what should be or not be done. This faculty of discrimination is found in no other creature but human beings. Other creatures are motivated by an instinct which is created by nature depending on their individual make-up. Animals have their individual nature also. It is only human beings who in all situations are faced with alternatives for action. They have the freedom to chose which way they should go. They have the freedom to go to the left or go to the right. It is through their faculty of discrimination that they can decide what is right and which way they should go.

Sometimes a question is asked: "What is the yardstick for progress in human life?"

It is very important that we all should know whether we are progressing or not. How then are we able to judge? People have different answers to this question. Many thinkers maintain that one's material circumstances are the yardstick. They quote money or possessions at the disposal of humans for their enjoyment - what is commonly known as 'material prosperity.' They categorise nations and people by the yardstick of material prosperity. According to this they group various nations as being 'developed', 'developing' or 'undeveloped'.

But is material prosperity the only element to judge whether human beings are progressing or not? If we think about it more deeply we must come to the conclusion that it is not. Is material prosperity meant for human beings or are human beings meant for material prosperity? What is the means and what is the end? The end is the human beings. Do they always become happy by possessing more wealth, better outfits or better cars? The reply is that they do not. Some nations at the top of material prosperity scale are shown statistically to have the largest amount of crime, drug

abuse, and acts of cruelty, rape and murder. Can we call it 'progress' when in the most prosperous countries people cannot sleep soundly without sleeping tablets? Animals are able to sleep soundly without pills but humans cannot! How then are humans any better than animals? I have read that in the most affluent countries the largest sales of medicines are of pills for sleeping. People cannot sleep even though they have comfortable houses, fine beds, nice clothes, large selections of cosmetics and luxurious cars. They cannot sleep and their bodies are not healthy, so what progress is that?

They try to amass more and more money - as if money has become their only aim in life. But if money becomes God in any nation, the future for those people is dark. The future holds destruction for those for whom money has become God. It is simple logic and anybody can understand it. Money in itself has no value and no worth. Material possessions are better than money because you do not use money, but you can use articles. You may say that you can use money to purchase articles, but you eat bread and not money. So are not bread and milk superior to money? Is your hunger satisfied by having dollars? Your hunger is satisfied by having bread. You must understand that possessions are better than money, and that living creatures are better than possessions. Possessions are meant for them to use. And the human being is the best out of all living creatures. How is this possible?

Purely from the economic point of view, the bodies of animals are usually more valuable than human bodies. I mean that when animals die their bodies can be used. With some animals their hides or bones can be used or their tusks in the case of elephants. In the case of human beings the body is not much use. From this viewpoint the bodies of animals have more economic value. So why do we praise the human body? Why do we say that the human body is the best? It is the best because it is only in this human body that God is experienced and the final truth is known. The point is that only from this angle is human body superior to the bodies of other creatures, not from the viewpoint of enjoyment or pleasure. Pleasure and pain are not the measures by which you can decide whether the human body is superior to other bodies. The human body is superior because of the faculty of discrimination which is found only in the humans. The faculty to decide what is right and what is wrong is not found in animals. Therefore, from this viewpoint the human body is superior to other bodies.

Using the criterion of pleasure and pain only, saints have said that some animals are better off than many humans. For example, some dogs that are owned by rich people lead more luxurious lives than some human beings. These dogs may have air-conditioned rooms, with fans to cool them. They travel around in big cars and are fed with expensive delicacies. However, they are just dogs and they cannot be better than humans. If we apply the same yardstick of enjoying physical comfort, many human beings may not be better than such dogs. Many dogs might enjoy more comfortable conditions than humans. So the importance of the human body should not be judged from the degree of comfort that it enjoys, but how great is its faculty of discrimination.

In conclusion we can say that possessions are better than money, living beings are better than possessions, and the human body is the best from all living beings. The human body is superior only because of the faculty of discrimination - the faculty which decides what is right and what is wrong. Now we may ask whether there is anything better than the faculty of discrimination? The answer is, yes! God is better than the faculty of discrimination, which itself is simply the conduit for reaching and experiencing God.

This faculty of discrimination(*vivek*) is not the product of the intellect (*buddhi*) but it flows through the intellect. The intellect becomes its instrument but it is not the product of the intellect. From where does it come? It comes from God. It is God who gives the faculty of discrimination. God is the source of all virtues and God is the infinite truth. From the infinite truth discrimination comes to human beings like a ray from the sun.

Thus in this sequence money is the last element and on the lowest plane. It is the misfortune of mankind to be running after money all the time. Money has its utility and I do not say that money is not required. But money should be our servant and not our master, and who is the master of money? Certainly it is not the person who possesses money. No! The master of money is only that person who can spend money. A person whose tendency is to amass money is a slave to money. It is in this way that life should have priorities. We should attach more importance to possessions than to money, and more importance to living creatures than to possessions. More importance, of course is due to human beings among living creatures because of discrimination. If there is no discrimination no importance should be attached.

In this way we realise the aim of life, but realisation of this aim happens only after great training and great discipline. As human beings we are born with many tendencies found in the animal world. Through the faculty of discrimination we have to arise above these tendencies and develop in us the finer virtues of life. These virtues develop not so much by reading books or even by listening to spiritual sermons as by having them in practice. Even a little practice is better than intensive study.

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